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Gender equality indicators

Summary of comments on the report on indicators of gender equality

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present note summarizes the comments by members of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) on the report on indicators of gender equality, provided in the electronic consultation in January-March 2014.

A total of 36 replies were received, from 30 countries and 6 international organizations. The comments showed broad support for the report and its proposed indicators. Countries and organizations also provided detailed comments on specific issues, which are summarized in this document.

The Conference is invited to discuss the report in the light of the comments summarized in this document. The Task Force on Indicators of Gender Equality will revise the report and present it for endorsement to the October 2014 meeting of the CES Bureau.

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I. Introduction

1. The present note summarizes the comments by members of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) on the report on indicators of gender equality, provided in the electronic consultation in January-March 2014.

2. In addition to the CES-wide consultation, the UNECE secretariat organized a workshop of gender statistics experts for discussing the availability and suitability of the proposed indicators in Geneva on 17-18 March 2014. Focusing on countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the workshop recommended some modifications to the set of proposed indicators.[1]

3. The Task Force on Indicators of Gender Equality will consider the material presented in this document as well as the recommendations of the workshop for revising its report by the October 2014 meeting of the CES Bureau.

II. Summary

4. The CES Task Force on Indicators of Gender Equality consisted of members representing Australia, Israel, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), the European Commission (Eurostat), International Labour Office (ILO) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

5. Following the electronic consultation of the members of the Conference of European Statisticians, responses were received from the following 30 countries and 6 organizations: Austria, Belarus, Brazil, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Georgia, Hungary, Israel, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, Eurasian Economic Commission, the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CISSTAT), Eurostat, *Institut de recherche pour le développement* (IRD, France), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Unesco Institute of Statistics (UIS).

6. Many countries expressed support for the recommendations and welcomed the initiative to harmonize and systemize gender indicators (Austria, Canada, France, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Republic of Moldova, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom, CISSTAT and Eurostat). For example, **Canada** commented that the report represented a thorough and significant effort to develop a consistent framework for measuring gender equality, whilst the **United Kingdom** noted the particularly challenging nature of the work that the task force had undertaken.

7. Detailed comments are summarized in sections III-VI.

[1] The report of the workshop is available at the UNECE web site at http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2014.03.genderworkshop.html

III. General comments

A. Approach taken in the work

8. Brazil said that the report succeeded in making an extensive review of international agreements and systemising relevant information on indicator selection. Canada said that the indicators were well rationalised. Ukraine felt that the approach to the selection of indicators was "necessary and sufficient" to monitor gender equality at national and international levels.

9. Hungary, Poland and Switzerland felt a greater emphasis was placed on issues related to women than to men (for example child custody), whereas Mexico commented that indicators should emphasise inequalities rather than underlining differences between men and women.

10. Regarding the indicator selection criteria, Latvia felt that the proposed indicators complied entirely with these criteria, whilst Austria did not. France considered that the proposed violence indicators went beyond the objective of using existing sources of indicators.

11. Hungary suggested that the UNECE countries should not all be treated the same way in the selection of indicators given the differing national circumstances.

12. The United States and Romania suggested that indicator availability might be given more weight in the selection of indicators. However, Belarus and the Czech Republic indicated that they monitor indicators from the global minimum set of gender indicators[2], which account for nearly half of the total number of indicators proposed. Switzerland welcomed that existing indicator sets were used.

13. The United States suggested that the approach to selecting indicators could mirror the approach used to choose the global minimum set of gender indicators, in terms of having different tiers of indicators, which, *inter alia*, considered availability. OECD indicated that the report could make better use of the results of the OECD Gender Equality Initiative, particularly with regard to measuring entrepreneurship.

B. Number of indicators and their availability

14. Austria and Portugal commented that there were a large number of indicators recommended, although many other countries suggested the inclusion of additional indicators (see section V).

15. A number of other comments highlighted data availability issues for certain indicators in their country or region (Austria, Portugal, Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Eurostat). Most of these comments related to the absence of victimisation surveys for measuring violence (Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Eurostat), particularly due to regulatory obstacles to the implementation of the European Statistics on Safety from Crime survey. Similar comments were received regarding indicators derived from time-use surveys (Lithuania, Slovakia and the United Kingdom) and Generations and Gender Surveys (Finland and Romania).

16. Support was received for violence indicators derived from victimisation surveys (Kazakhstan) and for more indicators from time-use surveys (Portugal). Belarus said that it would conduct a time-use survey in 2014-2015.

[2] Gender statistics: report of the Secretary General. Annex II: Minimum set of gender indicators, United Nations 2012. E/CN.3/2012/19

C. Sources of indicators

17. France praised the way the Task Force focused on existing databases as sources of indicators, and Sweden supported this approach to reduce the burden placed on NSOs to provide figures for these indicators.

18. Latvia felt that greater use could have been made from the online Eurostat database as a source of indicators; however, Portugal suggested some indicators might be too heavily reliant on EU data (e.g. the EU-SILC survey). Poland suggested greater reference to the indicators developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE).

D. Indicator definitions and comparability

19. Several countries (Austria, Czech Republic, Portugal and Romania) expressed a need for further definition of indicators, or consideration of comparability of indicators calculated from different sources of data.

E. Other comments

20. Hungary suggested that greater consideration be made of differences within countries (for example in migrant communities).

21. CISSTAT requested that the report be translated into Russian.

22. Canada felt that the decision not to propose a domain explicitly containing indicators of human rights left a gap regarding access to cultural and sporting activities.

IV. Comments on the structure

23. The comments received regarding the structure of the report were overwhelmingly positive.

24. The report was described as logical (Canada), transparent (Czech Republic, Slovakia), explicit (Finland), comprehensible (Switzerland), well-established (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), well-organised (Brazil), sensible (United Kingdom), clear and well structured (Portugal).

25. Hungary felt the report to be too detailed, whilst the United States described it as comprehensive.

26. Views varied on whether the consideration of indicators should belong within an annex or in one of the main chapters of the report: Eurostat supported the current structure, whereas Romania felt that it should constitute one of the main chapters of the report.

27. Eurostat and Finland supported having the summary of proposed indicators at the beginning of the report, right after the Introduction chapter, although Romania suggested that this should be placed in an annex. Brazil suggested splitting the further work chapter by domain, and dispersing it across the different sections of the annex, according to subject area. Canada suggested an additional annex containing details of the strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action.

28. Hungary commented that some domains are more detailed than others, and that the indicators should be more balanced between them. The United States commented that some domains (such as violence) had a greater proportion of headline versus supporting indicators than other domains.

29. Poland highlighted the difference between the domains chosen for the proposed indicators compared to those of the global minimum set of gender indicators. Whilst the United States felt that there was close alignment in general between this set of indicators, the Beijing Platform for Action and the global minimum set, they suggested dissolving the

domains on power and decision-making, and scattering their indicators across the other domains.

30. Mexico suggested a number of minor edits to the text of the document, and greater use of bullets in the document.

V. Comments on the proposed indicators

31. A summary of comments related to the proposed indicators are given by domain in the following subsections:

A. Poverty

32. Finland felt that the proposed indicators are realistic, ready to be implemented and in line with the existing indicator systems. Latvia had doubts about the suitability of indicators of relative and absolute poverty, given the anomalous effect that the economic crisis had had in reducing some of these measures of poverty. Instead, Latvia recommended an indicator that measured the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion, which it considered more robust.

33. Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation were cautious about calculating sex breakdowns of poverty measures, and suggested further work in this area. The Russian Federation highlighted the importance looking not just at the receipt of income by the household, but also at the way it is distributed among household members. Belarus already produces sex breakdowns of absolute poverty as well as age and household type breakdowns. Mexico wanted the proposed household type breakdown categories to be clarified.

34. Many comments were received in relation to the indicators of material deprivation. Hungary commented that the definition of material deprivation (according to the Eurostat definition) was now out of date. It also pointed out that our recommendation to measure material deprivation based on the absence of 4 out of 9 items represented severe material deprivation, as opposed to simply material deprivation. Latvia also suggested that severe material deprivation could be used as a basic-needs indicator.

35. Belarus, Canada and Hungary raised questions about the list of items used to define material deprivation. Canada questioned the relevance of some of the items outside of the European Union countries, while Hungary suggested having different item lists for different countries. Belarus uses a different list of items than the EU list, which they feel characterises poverty in their country well. Hungary suggested including housing deprivation within the material deprivation indicator, along with ownership of a computer with internet connection.

36. Canada suggested an additional indicator on financial stress due to individual and/or household debts, whilst CISSTAT suggested that a four dollars per day measure of absolute poverty would be more relevant for CIS countries than one dollar per day.

B. Education

37. France agreed with the selection of education indicators since the Task Force had examined existing sources of these indicators. The Czech Republic and Hungary also reported having high levels of availability of these indicators.

38. Regarding the indicator on literacy, Hungary and the UIS did not feel that this was relevant to more developed countries, and UIS suggested the alternative measure of functional literacy, subject to its availability across UNECE countries.

39. Hungary questioned the relevance to the education domain of the indicator on young people not in employment and not in education and training.

40. Latvia suggested including the gender parity index of the gross enrolment ratio for each level of education, whilst the UIS suggested adding subject-specific indicators from PISA surveys.

41. Regarding lifelong learning, Latvia suggested that some further work be done on how this indicator is defined.

42. UIS also suggested some editing changes to references to the global minimum set of Gender indicators.

C. Health

43. The Czech Republic and Hungary commented that data for those indicators derived from health surveys (such as smoking habits) were not available with high frequency.

44. Regarding the indicator on healthy life years, Portugal expressed concerns about the international comparability of this measure due to cultural relativity. Belarus also stated that it did not currently have available data for this indicator.

45. Canada suggested adding an indicator on mental or psychological health, while Latvia suggested an indicator on self-reported unmet health needs, from the SILC survey. The Czech Republic suggested the following additional indicators:

(a) Number of notified cases of tuberculosis by sex,

(b) Number of physicians and dentist by sex

(c) Development of cost structure per sickness-insured person

D. Violence

46. Several comments mentioned the lack of a violence survey in their country or region (Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Eurostat). Belarus would have difficulty producing retrospective indicators.

47. The United States noted that differences exist between the proposed indicators and those recommended for the global minimum set of indicators. They further commented that there was an excessive number of headline indicators in this domain, and suggested moving some indicators (such as on female genital mutilation) from the domain on children and adolescents, into the violence domain.

48. France felt that the restriction of the scope of the violence indicators to gender-based violence was problematic for a number of reasons, including conceptual reasons, and in terms of data availability. To address this issue, they suggested first including some indicators on general violence (e.g., homicide) before narrowing the focus to indicators of gender-based violence.

49. The United States suggested separating the physical and sexual aspects of violence in indicators on violence by the partner.

50. Canada commented that harassment was an important part of violence that had not been captured within the proposed indicators.

51. France and Latvia commented on the indicator of stalking. Latvia considered this indicator to be somewhat subjective, and therefore of limited international comparability. The description should be modified to exclude stalking by current partners for conceptual reasons. France highlighted the lack of international data availability and comparability, commented that it does not satisfy the report's indicator selection criteria (based on conceptual clarity and comparability and suggested dropping it.

52. Regarding indicators on rape, Sweden commented that paragraph 232 of the report apparently gives a general definition of rape, which seems to contradict earlier statements

about the importance of listing acts that are carried out, instead of definitions. Sweden considered this problematic, given the differing legal definitions of rape in different countries, and the different acts that may or may not be included depending on the jurisdiction in question.

53. On psychological violence, the United States noted that this indicator was restricted to psychological violence from partners. However, family members could also be a source of this form of violence. Mexico asked for clarification on the types of perpetrators included in some indicators, whilst the United States wanted explicit descriptions of the types of perpetrators included in the denominators of indicators.

54. Kazakhstan and Mexico asked for clarification of the requirement to conduct victimisation surveys for both men and women. Mexico raised concerns about the secrecy of the questions, and the requirement to sample only one person per household.

55. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia considered further investigation of the possibility of using administrative data for some of the violence indicators.

56. Several countries spotted a drafting error concerning the source of indicators on homicide, which should be from administrative sources, rather than from a survey.

E. Economy

57. Hungary commented that the indices already present in the UNECE gender database represented a better selection of indicators for the economy domain than those that had been proposed by the Task Force.

58. Regarding indicators on time-use, Lithuania, Slovakia and the United Kingdom commented on the limited availability of time-use survey data with which to compute these indicators. However, Slovakia pointed out that some of these indicators (on hours of paid and unpaid work) could be obtained from Labour Force Surveys.

59. Regarding the gender pay gap, Latvia expressed support for this indicator, and its breakdown by education; Hungary felt that an occupation breakdown should have also been included. Slovakia and Poland commented that the Labour Force Survey was not a suitable source of data for the gender pay gap, instead recommending the Structure of Earning Survey.

60. Slovakia cautioned against recommending indicators (or breakdowns) that would lead to an expansion of the Labour Force Survey, due to the difficulties that would be encountered in its implementation. Belarus highlighted the absence of variables in its Labour Force Survey for calculating the age of youngest child.

61. Finland and Hungary were cautious about having an indicator on time-related under-employment. Hungary, Poland and Portugal expressed doubts about the indicator on the minimum number of occupations that accounted for half of male/female workers, calling for clearer definition and additional information.

62. Regarding informal employment, Hungary and Poland highlighted difficulties in obtaining this data, while Finland asked for further clarification of the definition of this indicator.

63. Hungary pointed out that our entrepreneurship indicator on the proportion of employed who are employers, is already contained within the employment indicator on status in employment.

64. Mexico requested clarification of whether the indicator on workers working over 50 hours per week included unpaid work, and asked whether the indicator on unpaid work included unpaid family work.

65. Latvia suggested adding an indicator on in-work at risk of poverty, while the Czech Republic stressed the importance of measuring long-term unemployment.

F. Power and decision-making in society

66. The United States pointed out that the proposed set of indicators for power and decision-making in society were more elaborate than those of the global minimum set. At the same time, a number of suggestions were received from other countries for additional indicators.

67. The Czech Republic suggested an indicator on women in the army, by their rank, whilst Portugal suggested an indicator on women in religion within this domain.

68. UIS suggested additions in relation to academic staff by grade and by subject area, and on male and female heads of higher education institutions and board members.

69. Belarus commented on the limited relevance of some indicators (journalists and governing bodies of employer confederations), while the Czech Republic highlighted limited data availability regarding managerial positions, and decision-making in the TV and in the Radio.

70. Brazil suggested cross-referencing the indicator on the number of journalists in the Power and decision-making and Media domains.

G. Power and decision-making in the household

71. Hungary commented that the proposed indicators appear more like survey variables than indicators.

72. Belarus indicated that income data was available at household level, rather than individual level.

H. Media

73. Belarus and Romania commented on the unavailability of indicators derived from the Generations and Gender Survey. Romania further suggested that the subdomain on stereotypes of men and women should be transferred to the domain on Power and decision-making in the household.

I. Environment

74. Canada felt that the scope of the environment domain did not fully reflect all of the issues raised in this area of the Beijing Platform for Action, and suggested consideration of environmental volunteering, or sustainable household practices – either within this domain or in the domain on power and decision-making in the household.

J. Children and adolescents

75. Latvia highlighted the difficulties on collecting data on the number of 20-24 years married before age 18, while Switzerland felt that the rationale for excluding an indicator on allocation of food to children highlighted a bias towards females.

K. Demography

76. IRD suggested adding the sex ratio at birth to the list of indicators, given its relevance to certain UNECE countries.

VI. Proposals for further work

77. In the consultation, CES members were asked to comment on the proposals for further work identified by the Task Force, concerning (1) updating of the UNECE Gender

Database and (2) methodological work on the measurement of gender equality in poverty, violence, health, power and decision-making, media, and children and adolescents.

A. Addition to the UNECE Gender Database

78. Belarus, Lithuania, Mexico, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine and CISSTAT support the add to the UNECE Gender Database the headline indicators proposed by the Task Force. CISSTAT particularly supports database expansion with regard to topics of poverty, health and environment. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia proposes to improve the production and dissemination of relevant gender statistics.

79. Austria, Finland and Mexico suggested that database redevelopment should not overburden statistical offices. Finland suggested obtaining as much data as possible from the Eurostat online database. Mexico and CISSTAT commented that this work should take account of metadata.

80. Austria and Ukraine suggested further investigation of data availability for the indicators in international sources. Ukraine saw the database redevelopment as being an important step in ensuring international consistency of gender equality data.

B. Further methodological work

81. Hungary and Mexico supported the proposed methodological work. Brazil suggested further analysis looking at the return to education, for example in relation to the gender pay gap, broken down by personal attributes. Kazakhstan supported further work on health or indicators of constraints of life, and suggested further work on the methodology for measuring entrepreneurship. Latvia proposed further work to be undertaken on comparability of indicators, and on definitions of lifelong learning and vocational education and training. The United Kingdom Equality and Human Rights Commission suggested further work in the area of human rights indicators.

82. Finland, Latvia and Switzerland highlighted the challenges related to the methodological work on measuring poverty and social transfers. France and Eurostat noted the challenges related to the reporting of violence and the measurement of stalking.

VII. Proposal

83. The Conference is invited to discuss the report in the light of the comments summarized in this document. The Task Force on Indicators of Gender Equality will revise the report and present it for endorsement to the October 2014 meeting of the CES Bureau.